

Statement on Santa Fe's Fluoridation Ordinance (No. 2025-19)

The New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care does not support the City of Santa Fe's recent decision to remove fluoride from its community water system. This action jeopardizes the oral and overall health of residents and will increase costs for families, insurers, and taxpayers.

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that, at optimal levels, is safe and effective in preventing tooth decay. Community water fluoridation (CWF) has been proven for more than 75 years to benefit both children and adults, reducing cavities by about 25 percent across all ages. The CDC recognizes fluoridation as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

According to the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, eliminating water fluoridation across New Mexico would result in nearly \$306 million in additional dental treatment costs over five years. For Santa Fe, this translates into millions of dollars in new expenses – costs that will fall on local families, insurers, and public programs such as Medicaid.

Ending fluoridation will have the greatest impact on rural and low-income communities, where families already face barriers to accessing preventive dental care. Without this proven public health measure, Santa Fe can expect more cavities, more missed school and workdays, more emergency dental visits, and higher healthcare spending.

Other communities that ended fluoridation have seen the consequences firsthand. Calgary, Alberta saw higher rates of childhood tooth decay after stopping fluoridation in 2011, while Windsor, Ontario ultimately reinstated fluoridation in 2018 after similar increases in cavities.

Fluoridated water remains one of the safest, most effective, and most cost-efficient public health measures in history. Maintaining CWF is not simply a dental issue – it is a commitment to protecting public health and responsible stewardship of community resources.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Thompson, DDS
Chair, New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care

References

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